



EXTERNAL STRATEGIES

Modify Benefit Design to Increase Access to Lifestyle as Medicine

A key strategy for increasing access to and coverage for Lifestyle as Medicine is through benefit design and a robust network of multidisciplinary healthcare providers that practice and appreciate the value of lifestyle medicine. There are a number of alternative payment models, including value-based models, that are closely aligned with lifestyle medicine.

Address the Individual and the Collective (Community)

As employers endeavor to advance Lifestyle as Medicine within their organizations, there is a very real opportunity for them to positively impact their community as well, creating shared value.

Actively Engage in Advocacy

Employers have a diverse array of opportunities to advocate for Lifestyle as Medicine. One such example is the potential to advocate for more rapid shift to alternative payment models to accelerate the transition from a sick care system to a true healthcare system that values prevention. At a more foundational level, employers can also advocate for Medicaid expansion in states that don't have it.

Create Consortia or Multi-Employer Trusts to Increase Purchasing (& Negotiating) Power

Given the challenges some small to midsize organizations expressed with providing Lifestyle as Medicine initiatives or having limited purchasing power with insurers, employers could consider forming consortiums, co-ops, or trusts to increase access.

Create a Mechanism for Sharing Employer Best Practices

Creating a formal vehicle for organizations who are interested in advancing Lifestyle as Medicine to communicate, collaborate, and share best practices may accelerate progress.

Shift Quality Standards

Shifting national quality standards may be an effective strategy for increasing demand for Lifestyle as Medicine.

Seek out Partners in The Community

There are a number of potential partners (e.g., grocery chains) with whom employers could collaborate to advance their Lifestyle as Medicine initiatives.

Notes _____

For more information, visit: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/08901171231184527a>

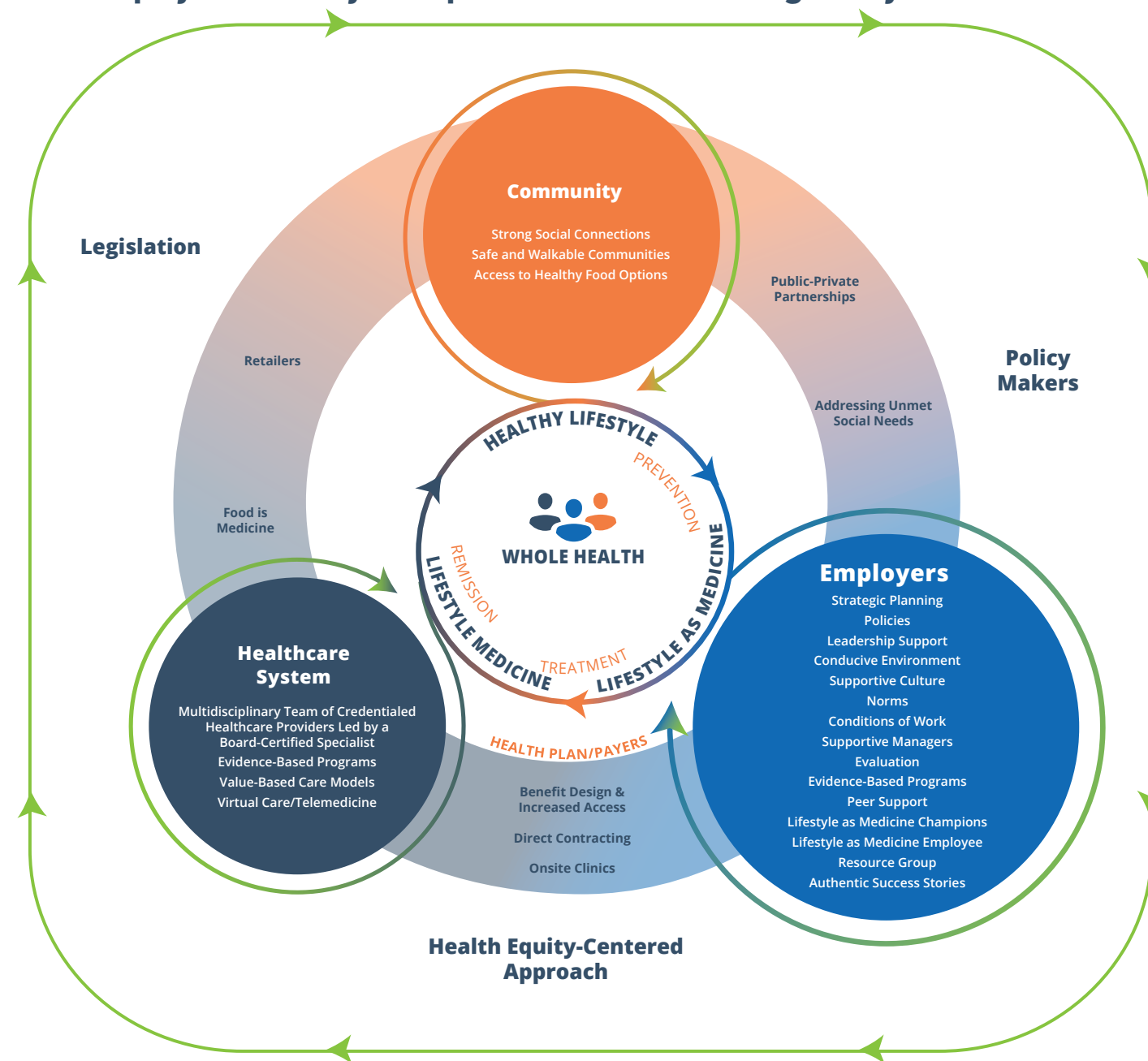


Activating Employers as Agents of Change in the Implementation of Lifestyle Medicine

The Health Enhancement Research Organization (HERO) recently completed a year-long initiative funded by the Ardmore Institute of Health to explore the ways in which employers could act as agents of change to advance the implementation of Lifestyle as Medicine in their organizations. The results were a set of guiding principles, internal strategies, and external strategies that can enable employers to advance Lifestyle as Medicine to promote whole health and to be a catalyst for change.

Lifestyle as Medicine involves implementing a continuum of health-equity centered, comprehensive, integrated, evidence-based initiatives in multiple domains (including healthy eating characterized by a whole-food, plant-predominant eating pattern; regular physical activity; adequate and restorative sleep; stress management; positive and meaningful social connection; time in nature; and avoidance of risky substances) as the foundational, first-line of efforts to promote whole health.

Employers Can Play an Important Role in Advancing Lifestyle as Medicine





GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Employ an Equity-Centered Approach that Optimizes Whole Health for All

Perhaps no other singular issue is as fundamental to realizing the vision of whole health as the need to advance health equity. Thus, a health-equity centered approach should be a foremost consideration in all Lifestyle as Medicine initiatives.

Collaborate with Aligned Stakeholders to Advance Lifestyle as Medicine

Employers don't have to go it alone—they can raise voices in concert with others who have aligned interests and missions. A growing number of diverse professional organizations, institutions, foundations, and other groups are working in parallel to advance Lifestyle as Medicine in diverse settings and implementing it in various ways.

Recognize that Lifestyle as Medicine is a Continuum

Intensive therapeutic lifestyle change programs implemented in clinical settings by certified clinicians represent one end of a continuum of Lifestyle as Medicine. Community-based programs, such as the Diabetes Prevention Program, have also been demonstrated effective. Thus, employers have a unique opportunity to act as a conduit to intensive programs in the healthcare system as well as in community-delivered programs for prevention, but should not overlook the opportunity to offer integrated internal initiatives for prevention and management of chronic conditions and the promotion of whole health.

Treat Lifestyle as Medicine as a Team Sport

The practice of lifestyle medicine in clinical settings is inherently a multidisciplinary endeavor and is being implemented in some employer on- or near-site clinics. Employers need not, however, have all of those capabilities in house to advance Lifestyle as Medicine. Many employers shared examples of allied health

professionals from different specialties leading the charge within their organization or of successful collaborations with local healthcare systems, physician practices, and community-based organizations to increase employee involvement in a range of initiatives.

Be Inspired by Success Stories

One of the goals of this initiative was to shine a light on bright spots—organizations and leaders who are exemplifying the implementation of Lifestyle as Medicine from whom others can learn. Other bright spots—including the Air Force and Eric Adams—are gaining increasing attention.

Rely on Evidence-Based Interventions

A longstanding central tenet of all successful health and well-being initiatives applies equally to Lifestyle as Medicine efforts: Show us the data. Fortunately, evidence-based programs (e.g., Full Plate Living) have been developed, and others are emerging and being evaluated.

Make a Compelling Business Case (Based on More than Cost Savings)

A compelling business case should address but not rely exclusively on cost savings. The metrics that carry the most weight may vary from organization to organization but should reflect the impact on multiple levels in an ecological fashion (e.g., individual employee disease remission, sustained behavior change, health and performance outcomes) and evaluate ripple effects.



INTERNAL STRATEGIES

Elevate Lifestyle as Medicine to a Strategic Objective

Ideally, organizations can make Lifestyle as Medicine the unifying construct for their health and well-being strategy, but at a minimum should consider aligning internal metrics (e.g., having Lifestyle as Medicine metrics tied to annual performance reviews and strategic objectives).

Create and Enforce Supportive Policies

Having formal policies that reflect and support the organization's values around Lifestyle as Medicine is essential. Clear and consistent policies are also instrumental in avoiding perverse incentives or mixed messages. Policies can also facilitate engagement in Lifestyle as Medicine initiatives.

Provide Visible Leadership Support for Lifestyle as Medicine

Senior leadership support for Lifestyle as Medicine is essential to its success within an organization.

Create a Conducive Environment & Supportive Culture

Establishing a culture of health via structural changes, environmental nudges, and other cultural shifts (e.g., availability of plant-based options in cafeteria, work time to participate) is a key contributor to the success of employer's efforts to promote whole health.

Consider Whether Conditions of Work are a Social Determinant

Ensuring that work conditions (e.g., long hours, lack of a living wage, unpredictable shifts) are not a determinant of health is also imperative for advancing Lifestyle as Medicine.

Deploy Strategic Communications

Multi-channel, tailored, strategic communications have also been identified as a key contributor to the success of employee health and well-being initiatives, and programs related to Lifestyle as Medicine are certainly no exception.

Create Organizational Norms

Norms are a linchpin in successful employer-administered health and well-being programs. Thus, it's crucial to ensure that the norms of an organization support Lifestyle as Medicine.

Enable Supportive Managers

Managers can make an enormous contribution to the engagement of their team members in Lifestyle as Medicine interventions.

Align All Internal Stakeholders

It's critical to align all internal stakeholders (e.g., senior leaders, human resources, occupational health, unions).

Conduct Rigorous, Multi-Level Evaluations

To ensure the data captured can refine initiatives over time, it is critical to establish baseline measures and to define goals and metrics to track effects at multiple levels on a wide range of outcomes (e.g., process measures; pre-post program results; and impact). A phased evaluation approach is essential given that immediate post-intervention or interim outcomes often cannot capture the total impact of an initiative. Behavior changes in the short-term may lead to delayed improvements in clinical outcomes.

Implement Tailored, Evidence-Based Programs

There is clear and compelling evidence for the power of tailored behavior change interventions in promoting Lifestyle as Medicine. The need to base the tailoring on rigorous behavior change science is clear. Cultural tailoring is also essential.

Involve Lifestyle as Medicine Champions

Internal champions can catalyze change within the organization—gathering buy-in from different parts of the organization and garnering support and resources, amplifying the organization's messaging, and encouraging participation.

Build In Peer Support

Peer support (e.g., Lifestyle Medicine Employee Resource Groups) is another critical contributor to successful health and well-being initiatives.

Use Storytelling

Leveraging the undeniable power of authentic storytelling in multiple channels is a potent strategy to increase buy-in throughout an organization. Storytelling appeals to feelings, and thus can change hearts and minds and enable vicarious learning.

Start Small and Build Momentum

There is value using a phased approach within their organization—starting small, conducting pilots, and encouraging employees to experiment with lifestyle medicine initiatives—particularly if leaders participate.

Notes _____

Notes _____
